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April 23, 2014

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chair
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From: William T Fujioka
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PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN "EXPECTING MORE: A BLUEPRINT FOR RAISING THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF FOSTER AND PROBATION YOUTH"

On February 14, 2006, the Board approved "*Expecting More: A Blueprint for Raising the Educational Achievement of Foster and Probation Youth*," developed by the Education Coordinating Council (ECC), and instructed the ECC to report its progress in implementing the recommendations in that document to the Board every six months. Once the ECC became a part of the Chief Executive Office (CEO) Service Integration Branch (SIB) in July 2009 and adopted a smaller staffing structure, the ECC began reporting its progress on this Plan annually. The first Progress Report was delivered to the Board on August 14, 2006; this is now the eleventh report.

As the Board directed, the purpose of the ECC is to coordinate efforts to raise the educational achievement of system youth across organizations and jurisdictions, functioning as an advocate, convener and broker that mobilizes resources, resolves barriers, and spearheads innovative policies and strategies. The various members of the ECC collectively reaffirmed their commitment to this role during a strategic planning process in 2010 and adopted an updated strategic plan on May 26, 2011, that is grounded in the vision and recommendations set forth in *Expecting More*. The progress in implementing this new ECC strategic plan is detailed below.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"

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Some key Strategic Plan accomplishments during the past year are:

Priority Area 2: Youth Education and Development

Outcome No. 1: DCFS and probation youth successfully transition to preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, adult education, vocational school, and college, and smoothly transfer between schools

The Juvenile Re-Entry Council, under the leadership of the Delinquency Court, has worked over the past several years to put into place a protocol to successfully transition probation youth returning home from camp. One of the most important parts of the transition process is the timely enrollment of youth in an appropriate school program. The Council proposed enhanced school transition procedures which were tested in a pilot project by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). During the fall of 2012, Delinquency Court Supervising Judge Donna Groman invited all 81 school districts to participate in a *Road Show* meeting to learn about LAUSD's program and to encourage their adoption of similar written policies for re-entry. Representatives from 60 districts attended at least one of the meetings held in each of the County's eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs). Probation Department administrative, camp and school-based program staff explained the re-entry process, described the education that youth receive in camps, and outlined the problems experienced in getting students back into community schools. Explanations of applicable laws were provided by the Alliance for Children's Rights and transition counselors from LACOE and the Department of Mental Health provided key information on their services. A key result is that school staff indicated a very strong interest in participating in the Probation Department's multidisciplinary team meetings held 90 days prior to a student's release from camp and, given the remote location of most camps, offered to join these meetings by phone or video conferencing. *Road Show* participants and others then followed up with school districts to ensure that written policies on re-entry are put into place.

Outcome No. 2: Prevent/reduce school truancy and engage truant youth in safe and welcoming educational programs

As reported to the Board in August 2011, ECC Vice-Chair Judge Nash created a Truancy Task Force at the end of 2010 to reduce the number of school trancies, especially those referred to the Informal Juvenile and Traffic Court (IJTC), by bringing the courts, law enforcement, schools, cities, and community groups together to identify and then systematize best practices and promising ideas countywide. Coinciding with the publication of its 2012 report, *A Comprehensive Approach to Improving Student Attendance in Los Angeles County*, the task force decided to broaden its focus to address all school absences and, accordingly, changed its name to the School Attendance Task Force (SATF).

The SATF then created a series of workgroups to implement the report's key recommendations. During the 2012-13 Fiscal Year, a number of significant accomplishments have been made by SATF members in the following areas:

Outcome No. 3: Truancy Diversion

On February 22, 2012, the City of Los Angeles took action to amend its Municipal Code section on daytime curfew violations to encourage students to go to school rather than taking punitive measures when they do not. In July 2012, the City of Los Angeles opened 13 City Youth Worksource Centers (subsequently increased to 16). As a result of these two actions, there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of truancy citations issued by the Los Angeles School Police Department (LASPD). Instead of routinely issuing tickets to out-of-school students, the LASPD now refers most to one of the Youth WorkSource Centers, which each house a full-time LAUSD attendance counselor. These Centers, open from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and on Saturdays, also provide job training, mental health services and other resources to improve the educational outcomes of household members and raise family income.

The LASPD reports that, in comparison with the 2004-09 timeframe when approximately 290 citations per month were issued, only 40 per month were issued during the 2012-13 school year. This represents a **nearly 90 percent decrease** in the number of citations issued. The number of citations written in the early morning (while, presumably, students are on their way to school) has also dropped substantially. LAUSD reports that 195 of the approximately 1,500 youth seen during the first six months of the Youth Worksource Center program have been referred through LASPD's truancy diversion program. Of these, 143 have successfully completed the program (so far) and only 26 were referred to the Probation Department for failing to meet with a counselor.

With the closure of all 12 Informal Juvenile and Traffic Courts (IJTC) in Los Angeles County on June 15, 2012, citations for truancy and for other minor, non-traffic offenses (such as fare evasion, possession of tobacco and loitering) are being referred to the Probation Department for disposition. A multi-level protocol has been implemented which includes a range of possible actions for dealing with these citations, with a graduated series of consequences depending upon the severity of the offense and the youth's compliance with assigned sanctions. From July 15, 2012 through June 15, 2013, 46,890 citations were diverted to the Probation Department, with the highest number from the Los Angeles Police Department, followed by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), the Long Beach Police Department, the Los Angeles School Police Department and the Long Beach School Police Department. Ticketed youth under the supervision of the dependency court (about two percent) are referred to the Department of Children and Family Services

(DCFS) and those receiving mental health services are referred to the Department of Mental Health (DMH). Only about 10 percent of referred youth are on active probation.

Outcome No. 4: School Attendance Awareness

A countywide marketing campaign was launched in the fall of 2012 to aggressively promote school attendance, with the Board, the City of Los Angeles and 13 local school districts all declaring September as *School Attendance Month*. A press conference was held on September 7, 2012 at the Boyle Heights Technology Youth Center to highlight the launch of the *School Attendance Month*, with leaders from the County, City, Juvenile Court, Public Counsel Law Center, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), LAUSD, Pomona, Lynwood Unified School Districts and Centinela Valley Union High School District participating, as well as parents and over a dozen students. Numerous activities took place during the month, including the first-ever countywide Student Recovery Day held on September 14, 2012. On that day, elected officials, school staff, community volunteers and parents across the County visited the homes of thousands of students who had dropped out, as well as those who were chronically absent, to encourage them to return to school. LAUSD reports that over 700 volunteers participated in its Student Recovery Day activities, which were focused at 13 of its highest-need school sites (those with the highest dropout rates). All of these sites were in close proximity to the 13 new Youth Worksource Center locations. As a result of this one-day effort, 1,200 of its students were "recovered" into district schools.

Outcome No. 5: Exclusionary School Discipline Reform

Several SATF members participated on the hearing panels at *Why Are California Schools Suspending More Students Than They Graduate? A Statewide Hearing Examining New Federal Civil Rights Data and Exploring Alternative Discipline Policies that Work for all Students* on September 10, 2012. Russlynn Ali, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights in the United States, was the keynote speaker. Her lecture highlighted new data documenting the overuse of suspensions in schools across the nation, especially among youth of color. It was noted that 93 percent of all LASPD citations go to African-American and Latino students, with 40 percent of these going to students aged 14 and younger. California schools suspend more than 400,000 students a year. There was wide agreement amongst the panels that schools need to take more responsibility for discipline decisions, as they routinely did before zero tolerance policies were put in place. The national Dignity in Schools Campaign and its Model Code offers districts a proven alternative to harsh discipline practices, and the Los Angeles chapter (with most participating organizations also members of the SATF) is very actively reaching out to local school districts to offer staff training and other resources. LAUSD reported that Garfield High School, because of its high suspension rate, decided to remove suspension as a disciplinary action and, instead, combined the district's Positive

Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model with strong parent and community engagement. As a result, Garfield High School reduced its suspensions from 581 in 2006-07 to a single incident (which, due to its nature, was required by state law) in 2010-11 and, again, in 2011-12. Further, though not specifically targeted, Garfield High School's Academic Performance Index jumped by 75 points and its school culture/climate became significantly more positive.

The SATF Exclusionary School Discipline workgroup followed up by developing a resolution promoting a host of exclusionary discipline reforms based on the experiences of Garfield High School and other schools across the country, which was approved by the SATF on March 5, 2013 and adopted by the ECC at its April 4, 2013 meeting. This resolution urges all school districts in Los Angeles County to address exclusionary discipline and to implement alternatives to improve school climate and student achievement, including: adopting proven discipline practices such as school-wide positive behavior supports and restorative justice practices; working to reduce reliance on out-of-school suspensions, expulsions and other punitive practices such as school-based citations, arrests and other referrals to the juvenile court; prioritizing keeping students in their regular classroom setting and school; providing supports to teachers, administrators and other educational staff to address discipline challenges; and engaging parents, students and community members in the development of equitable discipline policies and practices. A letter was sent to all school superintendents, encouraging them to consider this approach for their schools and informing them of available resources. Also, SATF members and other experts will meet with as many superintendents as possible to advocate for implementing the practices highlighted in the resolution.

In May 2013, the LAUSD Board of Education took the lead in implementing this resolution by adopting a groundbreaking School Discipline and School Climate Bill of Rights. This document: 1) mandates the use of alternatives to school suspension when permitted by law, full compliance with the district's 2007 school-wide positive behavior intervention and supports discipline policy, and full implementation of the practice of restorative justice throughout the district by 2020; 2) prohibits suspension or expulsion for "willful defiance;" 3) requires school-site training when schools exceed specified suspension numbers; 4) increases data collection and sharing on discipline practices, tickets and arrests; 5) provides student and parent access to discipline data; 6) more explicitly defines the role of police on campuses to ensure that students are not criminalized for school behaviors; and 7) establishes a process for appealing suspensions.

Almost a dozen bills supporting one of more of these exclusionary discipline reform principles were adopted by the California legislature this past year, reflecting a statewide awareness of the need to move away from blanket, zero tolerance policies in

favor of identifying and treating the root causes of school-based misbehavior and making every attempt to keep students in school whenever possible.

Judge Nash, Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, ECC Vice-Chair and SATF Chair, spoke at the Congressional Forum on School Safety Issues hosted by Congressman Tony Cardenas on April 27, 2013, and several SATF members testified on the need for exclusionary discipline reform.

The SATF created and organized a plenary panel, as well as several breakout sessions, at the Second Annual Los Angeles Gang Violence Prevention and Intervention Conference held on May 6 and 7, 2013 at The California Endowment. The plenary panel included opening remarks by ECC Chair and then LAUSD Board of Education President Monica Garcia, with Judge Nash, SATF Exclusionary Discipline Workgroup Chair Zoe Rawson, and Department of Public Health (DPH) Director Jonathan Fielding also addressing the public.

Outcome No. 6: School-Based Arrest Reform

In response to a series of extremely violent incidents at school sites across the country in recent years, many school districts have adopted zero tolerance policies and have greatly increased the presence of police on campuses. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of students referred to juvenile courts for minor, school-based infractions. To address this school-to-prison pipeline issue, Clayton County Georgia Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Steven Teske convened a broad mix of stakeholders throughout his county to develop a program that would, whenever possible, keep low-risk student offenders in school. This program's core strategy is to use school resource officers to work with students who commit low-grade offenses (such as trespassing, fighting, and vandalism), connect them to needed services and employ a graduated discipline approach. Typically, students are not sent to court until they commit a fourth offense. The consequent change in school climate generated a (very unexpected, but highly significant) 80 percent decrease in dangerous weapons on campus, a 51 percent decrease in felony crimes, and a 20 percent increase in graduation rates.

Los Angeles County Delinquency Court Supervising Judge Donna Groman, in partnership with the Public Counsel Law Center, is working to establish a similar program in Los Angeles County. Representatives from the Probation Department, DCFS, DMH, the courts, LAUSD, LACOE, other school districts, the District Attorney, Public Defender, Sheriff's Department, Los Angeles Police Department, community advocates, the ECC, and others met in the fall of 2012 to determine what could be done here. Efforts are now being made to pool stakeholder resources to provide restorative justice programs in all local school districts as an alternative to issuing citations for

low-level offenses and misdemeanors. As noted earlier, LAUSD has committed to providing these programs at all of its schools by 2020.

Outcome No. 7: Free Student Metro Pass Campaign

Believing that free public transportation would facilitate regular school attendance for tens of thousands of students in Los Angeles County, the SATF established a Free Student Metro Pass workgroup to design and launch a local campaign with the goal of securing free Metro passes for all students throughout Los Angeles County. The workgroup's first step has been to gather relevant data about the major reasons for students not regularly attending school, student transit usage, the number of citations issued for fare evasion, the amount of money spent by major school districts on transporting general, homeless and other high-need students to school, and identifying the key transportation barriers contributing to truancy. Inquiries have also been made to other jurisdictions with free student transit pass programs (such as Boston, New York City and Oakland) to determine how they finance their programs.

Preliminary data from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department documents 7,622 citations issued by that agency in 2011 to youth under the age of 18 on the Metro system, with the most common citation issued for fare evasion. Of the 46,890 citations diverted to the Probation Department from law enforcement agencies from June 15, 2012 to June 15, 2013, 12,978 (27.6 percent) were for fare evasion. The youngest person cited was seven years of age. Given the amount of administrative time spent dealing with these citations, the costs of providing free student Metro passes may prove to be significantly less than those required to manage these thousands of citations annually.

Recognizing that criminalizing students who commit minor infractions on public transportation contributes to the growing school-to-prison pipeline, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), LAUSD and the LASPD announced the launch of a Transit Juvenile Diversion Program on September 10, 2012 to keep students who ride the Metro buses and trains in school and out of the criminal justice system, in the event they are cited for minor infractions.

On April 4, 2013, the ECC adopted a recommendation submitted by the SATF's Free Metro Pass workgroup urging the ECC to collaborate with school districts, other organizations, and the MTA to secure free Metro passes for all students from preschool to college. SATF's Free Metro Pass Campaign workgroup has since developed a survey (with short and long versions) on the transportation experiences of school-age youth in the County, and is administering it to at least 1,000 students. A questionnaire has also been posted online (at SurveyMonkey.com) to gather information on specific student transportation costs for school districts, charter schools, and child-related

agencies. SATF members reached out to elected officials, community and faith-based agencies, and others for their endorsement of the free Metro pass idea, and launched a public campaign in September 2013.

DPH is currently developing an evaluation instrument that will measure the impact of free student Metro passes on school attendance.

Outcome No. 8: Policy and Practice Guides for School Districts

The comprehensive, 300-plus-page technical manual, *How to Improve School Attendance: A Practical Guide for Schools and School Districts*, was developed by the SATF and published on the ECC website in May 2013. It is designed to assist school districts implement the policies, best practices and program models highlighted in last year's SATF report. It includes extensive resource material on several major aspects of attendance, including attendance intervention and protocols, student discipline and positive behavioral support, parent involvement, and school/community partnerships. This manual is easy to navigate and can be used with hand-held devices.

A Guide to School-Community Connections was adopted by the SATF in May 2013 and, in addition to being a stand-alone policy document, it has also been incorporated as a chapter in the technical manual for school districts (described above) that is available on the ECC website. This school-community connections guide highlights three key priority areas: community needs assessment and community mapping, community-centered schools, and building parent leadership.

Priority Area 4: Data and Information Sharing

Outcome No. 9: Share education information electronically across systems

The ECC took the lead in organizing a demonstration of San Diego's electronic, web-based, countywide Foster Youth Student Information System (FYSIS) on August 22, 2012, which was hosted by the Chief Information Office. Representatives from the Juvenile Court, Chief Executive Office, Chief Information Office, DCFS, the Probation Department, DMH, LACOE, Los Angeles Unified School District, County Counsel, the Los Angeles Police Department, District Attorney, and other agencies participated during the morning and afternoon sessions, with the first being a general overview of the system and the second a more in-depth presentation for information technology personnel. Following this meeting (and having previously reviewed the systems developed by several other California counties), the SATF asked the ECC to adopt a resolution calling for a similar system to be created in Los Angeles County. That resolution was adopted by the ECC at its October 18, 2012 meeting.

Following the adoption of ECC's resolution in October 2012, DCFS formed a partnership with LAUSD to develop and pilot an electronic data-sharing system, based on the San Diego County model, for DCFS students enrolled in LAUSD schools. That system, the Student Information Tracking System (SITS), was launched in December 2012. However, educational information on only 3,000 students, those with the appropriate Education Code language appearing in the court's minute orders, was able to be included because of LAUSD's interpretation of FERPA provisions. With the passage of the Federal Uninterrupted Scholars Act, however, all 11,879 DCFS students attending LAUSD schools are now included. As a result, SITS is fully functional, enabling school staff and DCFS social workers to easily view and share agreed-upon education data electronically on a daily basis, and caseworkers to provide the dependency court with current educational information as needed. Social-worker response has been positive, as SITS is simple to navigate and the need for paper record transfers has been almost completely eliminated. Workers are able to view, print, and add to court reports comprehensive information on students' educational history, grades, test scores, attendance, and whether or not they receive special education services, and school counselors are authorized to access and upload data.

Once social workers globally access this system, about 50,000 staff hours per year should be saved, and estimates for school district time-savings are as high as 150,000 hours per year. A similar partnership with the Pomona Unified School District has just been established and DCFS is now reaching out to other school districts that serve large numbers of foster students, such as Long Beach, Montebello, Pasadena, Compton and Antelope Valley, with the hope that they sign on by the end of the school year and that, within two years, all or most school districts in the County will be participating. DCFS has also begun meeting with LACOE, Probation and the Probation Department's legal counsel to see if this system can be adapted to also serve probation students.

The Uninterrupted Scholars Act, sponsored by Congresswoman Karen Bass, and signed into law by President Obama on January 14, 2013, amends the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to permit schools to share foster youth education records with social workers without first seeking parental consent or a court order. With this action, the major remaining barrier to the immediate and continuous sharing of foster student educational information between school districts and caseworkers was removed, thus paving the way for the development of a Los Angeles County-based electronic education data-sharing system for foster youth.

As evidenced by all the of above, ECC member agencies, partners, and community organizations are actively engaged in achieving the ECC's *Blueprint* and Strategic Plan goals and outcomes. The Council looks forward to making further significant progress in the coming year.

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If you have any questions or require any additional information, please let me know or your staff may contact Carrie Miller at (213) 974-4129, or via e-mail at cmiller@ceo.lacounty.gov.

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